

NARD50 Russian Formalism

Translation – reception – application

Part I. Overview of Russian Formalism

- Readings:
 - Emerson, Caryl. “Critical Models, Committed Readers, and Three Russian Ideas.” In: *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 11-33.
- Steiner’s three metaphors of RF
 - The Machine
 - The Organism
 - The System
- Eagleton, Terry. *Theory of Literature*.

Brief history of RF

- 1910s
- Moscow Linguistic Circle, OPOJAZ (Society for the Study of Poetic Language)
 - linguists, literary scholars
- Reaction to:
 - Romanticism
 - Positivism
 - Psychology
- Post-1917 development (Soviet “science”, emigration)
- International recognition (Prague, U.S.A., France)

Aims and Goals

- Literary work as an independent object
- “Literariness”
- The literary form – the world
- Concepts:
 - Automatism – Defamiliarization
 - Causality – Teleology
 - Material – Method/Devices
 - Fabula (story) – Syuzhet (plot)

Concepts I

- Literary work as an independent object
- “Literariness”
- The literary form – the world
- Concepts:
 - Automatism – Defamiliarization
 - Causality – Teleology
 - Material – Method/Devices
 - Fabula (story) – Syuzhet (plot)

Concepts II

- Causality – Teleology
 - ordering of “facts”
- Material – Method/Devices
 - parts and the whole
 - e.g. metaphors
- Fabula – Syuzhet
 - order of events – narration of events

- Boris Eikhenbaum

- *Theory of the "Formal Method"*

- theory derives from material
 - there is no finished science
 - research as method, not a dogma/ideology

- Yuri Tynyanov

- the form has a meaning-constitutive function and a priority over the content
 - study of complex structures, evolution(s) of genre(s), work-centered method
 - “system” → hierarchy within a work of art

• Roman Jakobson

- Literariness
- PLC
- binary structures (dynamic, mutually dependent oppositions)
- the communication model
 - functions of language:
- metonymy – metaphor opposition

- Vladimir Propp: *Morphology of the Folktale*

- Russian magical fairy-tales, epic ballads (*byliny*)
- a single action may be performed by different “persons” → 31 functions (*separation, return, discovery, punishment...*) → roles (*hero, villain, helper...*)
- a hierarchichal, structured system
- A. J. Greimas, C. Bremond, T. Todorov

Part II. Translating Russian Formalism (seminar discussion)

- Reading:
 - Sher, Benjamin. “Shklovsky and the Revolution.” In: *Theory of Prose* by Victor Shklovsky, translated by B. Sher (Champaign & London: Dalkey Archive Press, 1991): xv—xxi.
- Problems of translation
- Russian/English tradition(s)
 - Idealistic and Neo-positivistic tendencies
 - Focus on Shklovsky

Part III. RF for the English Reader (seminar discussion)

- Shklovsky, Viktor. “Art as Device.” In: *Theory of Prose*, translated by B. Sher (Champaign & London: Dalkey Archive Press, 1991): 1–14.
 - Focus on: terminology, argument, historical context, examples
 - Defamiliarization

- Booth, Wayne C. “Introduction.” In: *Problems of Dostoyevsky’s Poetics* by Mikhail Bakhtin, translated and edited by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984): xiii–xxviii.
 - Focus on:
 - dialogism, polyphony
 - *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Art*
 - carnevalesque, grotesque
 - *Rabelais and His World*
 - chronotopes; motifs (fool, picaro, idyll)
 - *The Dialogic Imagination*
 - “From the Prehistory of the Novelistic Discourse”

- Bakhtin, Mikhail. “From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse.” In: *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, translated by M. Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981): 41–83.
 - Focus on: terminology, argument, historical context, examples
 - The novel

Bibliography

- *Bakhtin, Mikhail. “From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse.” In: *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, translated by M. Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981): 41–83.
- *Booth, Wayne C. “Introduction.” In: *Problems of Dostoyevsky’s Poetics* by Mikhail Bakhtin, translated and edited by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984): xiii–xxviii.
- Emerson, Caryl. “Critical Models, Committed Readers, and Three Russian Ideas.” In: *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 11–33.
- Erlich, Victor. *Russian Formalism: History – Doctrine* (The Hague: De Gruyter Mouton, 1980), eBook (EBSCOhost).
- Holquist, Michael. *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World* (London: Routledge, 2002 [1990]).
- *Sher, Benjamin. “Shklovsky and the Revolution.” In: *Theory of Prose* by Victor Shklovsky, translated by B. Sher (Champaign & London: Dalkey Archive Press, 1991): xv–xxi.
- *Shklovsky, Viktor. “Art as Device.” In: *Theory of Prose*, translated by B. Sher (Champaign & London: Dalkey Archive Press, 1991): 1–14.
- Steiner, Peter. *Russian Formalism: A Metapoetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).
- Thompson, Ewa M. *Russian Formalism and Anglo-American New Criticism: A Comparative Study*. (The Hague: De Gruyter Mouton, 1971), eBook (EBSCOhost).
- Wellek, René. “13: Russian Formalism,” and “15: Mikhail Bakhtin.” In: *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750–1950. Vol. 7: German, Russian, and Eastern European Criticism: 1900–1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991): 318–47 and 354–71.

- * these are compulsory readings for the class